

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 JUSE-00
DHA-02 /080 W

-----141143Z 117379 /41

R 131714Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4599
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7881

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IT
SUBJECT:FURTHER VIOLENCE IN ROME

REF: A) ROME 6728; B) ROME 7550

SUMMARY: ROME WAS ROCKED BY VIOLENCE ON THE AFTERNOON AND
EVENING OF MAY 12 AFTER POLICE, ENFORCING A GOVERNMENT
BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CITY (SEE REF. A) REFUSED
TO ALLOW THE RADICAL PARTY AND OTHER LEFTIST GROUPS
TO HOLD A RALLY COMMEMORATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DIVORCE REFERENDUM. ONE YOUNG WOMAN WAS KILLED AND
EIGHT OTHER WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE. THE PROSPECT IS
FOR FURTHER TROUBLE ON MAY 13. DEMANDS BY RADICAL
AND FAR-LEFT PDUP PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR AN EXPLANATION
OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO LIFT THE BAN AND
"PROVOCATIONS" BY POLICE WERE ANSWERED BY INTERIOR MINISTER
COSSIGA IN A MAY 13 SESSION OF THE CHAMBER WITH A
STRONGLY WORDED DEFENSE OF THE FORCES OF ORDER AND
CONDEMNATION OF THE IRRESPONSIBLE ACTIONS OF THE
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RALLY'S SPONSORS. ELSEWHERE, AN ATTEMPT BY THE
PROCURATOR GENERAL OF MILAN TO REDUCE THE PRISON
POPULATION IN HIS DISTRICT BY SUSPENDING INDEFINITELY
THE SERVING OF ALL SENTENCES OF LESS THAN FOUR
MONTHS HAS BEEN SHELVED BY THE JUSTICE MINISTRY,
WHICH PROPOSES INSTEAD MEASURES TO REACTIVATE UNUSED
PRISON FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCT NEW ONES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RADICAL PARTY AND THE FAR-LEFT PDUP, ALON WITH EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ULTRA-LEFT GROUPS INCLUDING LOTTA CONTINUA, AVANGUARDIA OPERAIA, AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, ATTEMPTED TO HOLD A RALLY CELEBRATING THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE DIVORCE REFERENDUM IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE CURRENT BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CITY OF ROME. POLICE USED TEAR GAS TO PREVENT ROCK AND MOLOTOV-THRWOING STUDENTS FROM GATHERING FOR THE RALLY AND THEREAFTER VIOLENCE BROKE OUT IN SOME AREAS OF THE CITY. A YOUNG WOMAN BYSTANDER WAS KILLED AND ONE CARABINIERE AND SEVEN DEMONSTRATORS WERE WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE. ANOTHER YOUTH WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED WHEN STRUCK BY A TEAR GAS CANNISTER. COMMENT INDICATES THAT IN GENERAL POLICE REACTION WAS MORE SEVERE THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST.

3. RADICAL LEADER MARCO PANELLA AND PDUP DEPUTY DOMENICO PINTO CONDEMNED POLICE ACTIONS IN THE CHAMBER ON THE EVENING OF MAY 12 AND CHALLENGED INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA TO EXPLAIN THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO LIFT THE BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS ON THIS OCCASION. IN A STRONGLY WORDED REPLY ON MAY 13, COSSIGA DEFENDED THE ACTIONS OF THE POLICE AND LASHED THE RADICALS FOR THEIR IRRESPONSIBILITY IN ADVOCATION DEFIANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S BAN. THOUGH THE PSI DECLARED ITSELF IN ACCORD WITH THE RADICAL PARTY'S CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT, COMMENT IN PCI DAILY L'UNITA WAS MUCH MORE RESERVED. THOUGH MILDLY CONFIDENTIAL

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CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR NOT ALLOWING THE RALLY TO GO ON, L'UNITA CONDEMNED THE SPONSORS OF THE RALLY FOR IGNORING THE BAN AND AGGRAVATING AN ALREADY TENSE SITUATION. L'UNITA URGED EVERYONE TO EXERCISE "MAXIMUM SELF-CONTROL AND RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLINE."

3. INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE CONTINUED IN ROME ON MAYP
13. PANELLA HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE TENSION BY ISSUING A CALL OVER A PRIVATE RADIO STATION FOR STUDENT GROUPS TO CONVERGE ON THE CITY CENTER AND "MAKE ROME IMPOSSIBLE". INDICATIONS ARE THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME RESPONSE TO HIS CALL AND AT PRESENT IT APPEARS THAT CONFRONTATIONS AND VIOLENCE WILL CONTINUE. COMMENT: PANELLA'S ACTIONS ARE SOMEWHAT OUT OF CHARACTER FOR THE RADICALS, WHO HAVE PRIDED THEMSELVES ON THEIR NON-VIOLENCE AND ADERENCE TO THE CONSTITUTION. PANELLA'S SUDDEN RESORT TO A STRATEGY OF STREET CONFRONTATIONS COULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE HIS

PARTY'S IMAGE AT A TIME WHEN PUBLIC OPINION IS
GENERALLY SOLIDIFIED AGAINST VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM.
END COMMENT.

4. ELSEWHERE, AN ATTEMPT BY THE PROCURATOR GENERAL
OF MILAN TO REDUCE THE OVERFLOWING PRISON POPULATION
IN HIS DISTRICT BY SUSPENDING INDEFINITELY THE EN-
FORCEMENT OF PRISON SENTENCES OF LESS THAN FOUR MONTHS
HAS BEEN DISOWNED BY JUSTIC MINISTER BONIFACIO.
MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT
THE MILAN INITIATIVE IS OF QUESTIONABLE LEGALITY
AND HAVE INSTEAD PROPOSED MEASURES TO REACTIVATE
UNUSEF PRISON FACILITIES AND PROVIDED FOR THE CON-
STRUCTION OF NEW ONES. COMMENT: THIS REPRESENTS
SOMETHING OF A RETREAT FOR BONIFACIO, WHO HAD EARLIER
(SEE REF. B) ADVOCATED PENALTIES OTHER THAN INCAR-
CERATION FOR MINOR OFFENSES. BONIFACIO HAS BEEN
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CRITICIZED IN THE PAST FOR HIS CAUTIOUS, TECHNICIAN'S
APPROACH TO PROBLEMS WHICH DEMAND SWIFT AND DECISIVE
ACTION. IN GENERAL, OPINION BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE
THE GOVERNMENT FAVORS MEASURES THAT WOULD HAVE AN
IMMEDIATE IMPACT UPON THE TENSE SITUATION IN ITALY'S
OVER-CROWDED JAILS. JUDGING FROM PAST PERFORMANCE,
BONIFACIO IS ILL-EQUIPPED TO PROVIDE THE RAPID
AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE WHICH IS NOW NECESSARY.
GARDNER

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